

Starvation of Germany after World War II

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Allied Policies Force Starvation

Capt. Albert R. Behnke, a U.S. Navy medical doctor, stated in regard to Germany: "From 1945 to the middle of 1948 one saw the probable collapse, disintegration and destruction of a whole nation...Germany was subject to physical and psychic trauma unparalleled in history." Behnke concluded that the Germans under the Allies had fared much worse than the Dutch under the Germans, and for far longer.^[1]

Normal adult Germans in the American and British Zones were rationed only 1,550 calories per day. The average official calorie ration for Germans in the French Zone was only 1,400 per day. The actual calories received in the American, British and French Zones were often far less than these official amounts, and it was well known that these official ration amounts were not sufficient to maintain a healthy population. Herbert Hoover told President Truman that "the 1,550 ration is wholly incapable of supporting health."^[2] Hoover estimated that 2,200 calories per day "is a minimum in a nation for healthy human beings."^[3]

The destruction of the German infrastructure during the war had made it inevitable that some Germans would starve to death before roads, rails, canals and bridges could be restored. However, even when much of the German infrastructure had been repaired, the Allies deliberately withheld food from Germany. Continuing the policies of their predecessors, U.S. President Harry Truman and British Prime Minister Clement Attlee allowed the spirit of Henry Morgenthau and the Yalta Conference to dictate their policies toward Germany. The result was that millions of Germans were doomed to slow death by starvation.^[4]

The Allies had studied German food production during the war, so they knew what to expect once Germany was defeated. The Allies knew that to strip off the rich farmlands of the east and give them to the Poles and Russians deprived Germany of over 25% of her arable land. Germans also starved in the east because the Russians confiscated so much food and virtually all of the factories. The French forced famine in their zone by the seizure of food and housing. The famine in the French Zone went on for years.^[5]

The danger of hunger and starvation was slow to abate throughout Germany. The famine that began in Germany in 1945 spread over all of occupied Germany and continued into 1948. This famine was camouflaged as much as possible by the Allied armies and governments.^[6]

Many Germans were prepared to see the Allies as liberating angels at first, but they soon realized that the Allies were adopting policies designed to hurt Germany's recovery. The drastic reduction of fertilizer production under the Morgenthau Plan, for example, hurt Germany's capacity to grow her own food. The use of German prisoners as slave labor in Allied countries subtracted from the labor force needed to bring in the reduced harvest. German prisoners who worked as slave laborers in the United Kingdom and France were horrified upon arriving home to find their families starving.^[7]

Unable to feed themselves adequately from home production, the Germans tried desperately to increase production for export. However, the Germans were seriously hampered by the Allied

reparations policy, which prevented them from exporting goods to increase the shrunken German food supply. The Allies had decided to take huge reparations amounting to at least \$20 billion (\$279 billion in 2018 dollars). Even as late as 1949, 268 factories were removed from Germany wholly or in part. The reduction in exports for food ensured that the German people would keep on starving.[\[8\]](#)

The Allies not only prevented the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) from distributing food to German POWs, but they also refused requests by the ICRC to bring provisions into Germany for civilians. In the winter of 1945, ICRC donations to Germany were returned with the recommendation that the donations be used in other parts of war-torn Europe. The return of ICRC donations was made even for Irish and Swiss contributions that had been specifically raised to benefit Germany. It was not until March 1946 that ICRC donations were permitted to reach the American Zone in Germany.[\[9\]](#)

The Allies also prevented various private relief agencies from providing food to German civilians. For example, the Swiss Relief Fund started a charity to feed a meal once a day to a thousand Bavarian children for two months. The American Zone occupation authorities decided that this aid should not be accepted. One Quaker attempting to provide relief to Germans said, “The U.S. Army made it difficult for relief.” In the United Kingdom in October 1945, “even the concept of voluntary aid via food parcels from Britain’s civilians was anathema to Whitehall.” Such aid to Germany was strictly forbidden.[\[10\]](#)

U.S. Pvt. Martin Brech describes the famine conditions in Germany in 1945:

Famine began to spread among the German civilians also. It was a common sight to see German women up to their elbows in our garbage cans looking for something edible—that is, if they weren’t chased away.

When I interviewed mayors of small towns and villages, I was told their supply of food had been taken away by “displaced persons” (foreigners who had worked in Germany), who packed the food on trucks and drove away. When I reported this, the response was a shrug. I never saw any Red Cross at the camp or helping civilians, although their coffee and doughnut stands were available everywhere else for us. In the meantime, the Germans had to rely on the sharing of hidden stores until the next harvest.[\[11\]](#)

American soldiers also stole from the German people and let German children go hungry. American aviation hero Charles Lindbergh wrote:

German children look in through the window. We have more food than we need, but regulations prevent giving it to them. It is difficult to look at them. I feel ashamed, of myself, of my people, as I eat and watch those children. They are not to blame for the war. They are hungry children. What right have we to stuff ourselves while they look on—well-fed men eating, leaving unwanted food on plates, while hungry children look on?...There is an abundance of food in the American Army, and few men seem to care how hungry the German children are outside the door.[\[12\]](#)

The Allies adopted additional policies that caused starvation in Germany. Food production and food imports came under specific attack when the German fishing fleet was prevented from going to sea for a year. The Allies also used false accounting to not credit the value of some German exports to the German account, making it impossible for Germans to earn foreign currency to buy food. Simply stated, many valuable goods were stolen from Germans beyond the reparations agreed upon by the Allies.[\[13\]](#)

The German people put up a brave struggle for survival despite the harsh conditions. Malcolm Muir, publisher of *Business Week*, stated after a five-week tour of Europe, including Germany: "The Germans are making every effort to help themselves...It is not unusual to see a milch cow hitched to a plow, a woman leading the cow and a small boy guiding the plow." However, despite the best efforts of German farmers, the food situation became critical and then catastrophic.^[14]

An official of the Food Branch of the American Military Government made the following report concerning the conditions in Germany:

The greatest famine catastrophe of recent centuries is upon us in central Europe. Our Government is letting down our military government in the food deliveries it promised, although what Generals Clay, Draper, and Hester asked for and were promised was the barest minimum for survival of the people. We will be forced to reduce the rations from 1,550 calories to 1,000 or less calories.

The few buds of democracy will be burned out in the agony of death of the aged, the women, and the children.

The British and we are going on record as the ones who let the Germans starve. The Russians will release at the height of the famine substantial food stores they have locked up (300,000 to 400,000 tons of sugar, large quantities of potatoes).

Aside from the inhumanity involved, it is so criminally stupid to give such a performance of incredible fumbling before the eyes of the world. It makes all the many hard-working officers of the Office of Military Government, Food and Agricultural Branch, ashamed.^[15]

American journalist and radio broadcaster Dorothy Thompson wrote:

The children of Europe are starving. Six years of war, indescribable destruction, and the lunatic policies which have added to the disintegration inherited from the collapse of the Nazi regime have done their work. Germany, and with it Europe, is skidding into the abyss.

The facts are at last being revealed through what has amounted to a conspiracy of silence here...This war was fought by the West in the name of Christian civilization, the Four Freedoms, and the dignity of man against those who were perpetrating crimes against humanity. But policies which must inevitably result in the postwar extermination of tens of thousands of children are also "crimes against humanity."^[16]

The desperation of the German population for food was observed by Kathryn Hulme, the deputy director of one of Bavaria's many displaced persons camps. She wrote about the scramble for Red Cross packages at the Wildflecken Camp:

It is hard to believe that some shiny little tins of meat paste and sardines could almost start a riot in the camp, that bags of Lipton's tea and tins of Varrington House coffee and bars of vitaminized chocolate could drive men almost insane with desire. But this is so. This is as much a part of the destruction of Europe as are those gaunt ruins of Frankfurt. Only this is the ruin of the human soul. It is a thousand times more painful to see.^[17]

One survey in the American Zone concluded that 60% of the Germans were living on a diet that would lead to disease and malnutrition. By October 1945, random weighing of German adults revealed a falloff of body weight of 13-15%. Children, pregnant women and the elderly suffered the most. Their diets

were lacking sufficient protein and vitamins, and cases of rickets were common among German infants.[\[18\]](#)

The German Central Administration of Health reported the deadly effects of malnutrition:

The people hunger...They are emaciated to the bone. Their clothes hang loose on their bodies, the lower extremities are like the bones of a skeleton, their hands shake as though with palsy, the muscles of the arms are withered, the skin lies in folds, and is without elasticity, the joints spring out as though broken.

The weight of the women of average height and build has fallen way below 110 pounds. Often women of child-bearing age weigh no more than 65 pounds. The number of still-born children is approaching the number of those born alive, and an increasing proportion of these die in a few days. Even if they come into the world of normal weight, they start immediately to lose weight and die shortly. Very often the mothers cannot stand the loss of blood in childbirth and perish. Infant mortality has reached the horrifying height of 90%.[\[19\]](#)

The German people starved while the Americans around them lived in luxury. American historian Ralph Franklin Keeling wrote:

While the Germans around them starve, wear rags, and live in hovels, the American aristocrats live in often unaccustomed ease and luxury. Their wives must be specially marked to protect them from licentious advances; they live in the finest homes from which they drove the Germans; they swagger about in fine liveries and gorge themselves on diets three times as great as they allow the Germans, and allow "displaced persons" diets twice as great. When we tell the Germans their low rations are necessary because food is so short, they naturally either think we are lying to them or regard us as inhuman for taking the lion's share of the short supplies while they and their children starve.[\[20\]](#)

George Kennan was also outraged by the disparity in living conditions between the Germans and Americans in Germany. Kennan stated:

Each time I had come away with a sense of sheer horror at the spectacle of this horde of my compatriots and their dependents camping in luxury amid the ruins of a shattered national community, ignorant of the past, oblivious to the abundant evidences of tragedy all around them, inhabiting the same sequestered villas that the Gestapo and SS had just abandoned, and enjoying the same privileges, flaunting their silly supermarket luxuries in the face of a veritable ocean of deprivation, hunger and wretchedness, setting an example of empty materialism and cultural poverty before a people desperately in need of spiritual and intellectual guidance.[\[21\]](#)

U.S. Senators and British Humanitarians Protest Starvation Policies

Some informed political leaders spoke out against the Allied policy of mass starvation of the German people. In an address before the U.S. Senate on February 5, 1946, Sen. Homer E. Capehart of Indiana said in part:

The fact can no longer be suppressed, namely, the fact that it has been and continues to be, the deliberate policy of a confidential and conspirational clique within the policy-making circles of this government to draw and quarter a nation now reduced to abject misery.

In this process this clique, like a pack of hyenas struggling over the bloody entrails of a corpse, and inspired by a sadistic and fanatical hatred, are determined to destroy the German nation and the German people, no matter what the consequences.

At Potsdam the representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics solemnly signed the following declaration of principles and purposes: "It is not the intention of the Allies to destroy or enslave the German people."

Mr. President, the cynical and savage repudiation of these solemn declarations which has resulted in a major catastrophe, cannot be explained in terms of ignorance or incompetence. This repudiation, not only of the Potsdam Declaration, but also of every law of God and men, has been deliberately engineered with such a malevolent cunning, and with such diabolical skill, that the American people themselves have been caught in an international death trap.

For nine months now this administration has been carrying on a deliberate policy of mass starvation without any distinction between the innocent and helpless and the guilty alike.

The first issue has been and continues to be purely humanitarian. This vicious clique within this administration that has been responsible for the policies and practices which have made a madhouse of central Europe has not only betrayed our American principles, but they have betrayed the GIs who have suffered and died, and they continue to betray the American GIs who have to continue their dirty work for them.

The second issue that is involved is the effect this tragedy in Germany has already had on the other European countries. Those who have been responsible for this deliberate destruction of the German state and this criminal mass starvation of the German people have been so zealous in their hatred that all other interests and concerns have been subordinated to this one obsession of revenge. In order to accomplish this it mattered not if the liberated countries in Europe suffered and starved. To this point this clique of conspirators has addressed themselves: "Germany is to be destroyed. What happens to other countries of Europe in the process is of secondary importance."

Sen. Capehart's remarks were interspersed with a mass of supporting evidence. [\[22\]](#)

In a speech to the U.S. Senate on December 3, 1945, Sen. James Eastland of Mississippi spoke of the great difficulty he had encountered in gaining access to the official report on conditions in Germany. Sen. Eastland stated:

There appears to be a conspiracy of silence to conceal from our people the true picture of conditions in Europe, to secrete from us the fact regarding conditions of the continent and information as to our policies toward the German people...Are the real facts withheld because our policies are so cruel that the American people would not endorse them?

What have we to hide, Mr. President? Why should these facts be withheld from the people of the United States? There cannot possibly be any valid reason for secrecy. Are we following a policy of vindictive hatred, a policy which would not be endorsed by the American people as a whole if they knew true conditions?

Mr. President, I should be less than honest if I did not state frankly that the picture is so much worse, so much more confused, than the American people suspect, that I do not know of any source that is capable

of producing the complete factual account of the true situation into which our policies have taken the American people. The truth is that the nations of central, southern, and eastern Europe are adrift on a flood of anarchy and chaos.[\[23\]](#)

Sen. William Langer of North Dakota stated in the U.S. Senate:

History already records that a savage minority of bloody bitter-enders within this government forced the acceptance of the brutal Morgenthau Plan upon the present administration. I ask, Mr. President, why in God's name did the administration accept it?...Recent developments have merely confirmed scores of earlier charges that this addlebrained and vicious Morgenthau Plan had torn Europe in two and left half of Germany incorporated in the ever-expanding sphere of influence of an oriental totalitarian conspiracy. By continuing a policy which keeps Germany divided against itself, we are dividing the world against itself and turning loose across the face of Europe a power and an enslaving and degrading cruelty surpassing that of Hitler's.[\[24\]](#)

The Senate warmly applauded Sen. Langer's speech.

The Senate approved a resolution proposed by Sen. Kenneth Wherry of Nebraska to establish a group with a budget to study and report in detail the conditions in Germany. Wherry stated: "Terrifying reports are filtering through the British, French and American occupied zones, and even more gruesome reports from the Russian occupied zone, revealing a horrifying picture of deliberate and wholesale starvation." Wherry criticized the Truman administration for doing nothing despite the pleas for intercession to prevent a major tragedy. Wherry also questioned Governor Lehman, the person in charge of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), who admitted that the UN aid was not going to the starving Germans. Finally, Wherry said, "The truth is that there are thousands upon thousands of tons of military rations in our surplus stock piles that have been spoiling right in the midst of starving populations."[\[25\]](#)

Sen. Langer received new information which caused him to speak in the Senate on March 29, 1946:

[We] are caught in what has now unfolded as a savage and fanatical plot to destroy the German people by visiting on them a punishment in kind for the atrocities of their leaders. Not only have the leaders of this plot permitted the whole world situation to get...out of hand...but their determination to destroy the German people and the German Nation, no matter what the consequences to our own moral principles, to our leadership in world affairs, to our Christian faith, to our allies, or to the whole future peace of the world, has become a world scandal...We have all seen the grim pictures of the piled-up bodies uncovered by the American and British armies, and our hearts have been wrung with pity at the sight of such emaciation—reducing adults and even little children to mere skeletons. Yet now, to our utter horror, we discover that our own policies have merely spread those same conditions even more widely...among our former enemies.[\[26\]](#)

Sen. Albert W. Hawkes of New Jersey urged President Truman to allow private relief packages to be sent to Germany to prevent mass starvation of the German people. Truman in a reply dated December 21, 1945, stated "there is as yet no possibility of making deliveries of packages in Germany" because "the postal system and the communications and transportation systems of Germany are in the state of total collapse." Truman then said:

Our efforts have been directed particularly toward taking care of those who fought with us rather than against us—Norwegians, Belgians, the Dutch, the Greeks, the Poles, the French. Eventually the enemy countries will be given some attention.

While we have no desire to be unduly cruel to Germany, I cannot feel any great sympathy for those who caused the death of so many human beings by starvation, disease, and outright murder, in addition to all the destruction and death of war. Perhaps eventually a decent government can be established in Germany so that Germany can again take its place in the family of nations. I think that in the meantime no one should be called upon to pay for Germany's misfortune except Germany itself.

Until the misfortunes of those whom Germany oppressed are obliterated (sic), it does not seem right to divert our efforts to Germany itself. I admit that there are, of course, many innocent people in Germany who had little to do with the Nazi terror. However, the administrative burden of trying to locate these people and treat them differently from the rest is one which is almost insuperable.[\[27\]](#)

British intellectuals such as Bertrand Russell and Victor Gollancz also worked to publicize the suffering and mass starvation of the German people. Gollancz objected to the contrast he saw between the accommodations and food in the British officers' mess and the miserable, half-starved hovels outside. In March 1946 the average calories per day in the British Zone had fluctuated between 1,050 and 1,591. British authorities in Germany were proposing to cut the rations back to 1,000 calories per day. Gollancz pointed out that the inmates at Bergen-Belsen toward the end of the war had only 800 calories per day, which was not much less than the British proposal.[\[28\]](#)

Gollancz made a six-week tour of the British Zone in October and November 1946. In January 1947 Gollancz published the book *In Darkest Germany* to document what he saw on this trip. Assisted by a photographer, Gollancz included numerous pictures to allay skepticism of the veracity of his reports. The pictures show Gollancz standing behind naked boys suffering from malnutrition; or holding a fully worn and unusable child's shoe; or comforting a crippled, half-starved adult in his hovel. The point was to show that Gollancz had seen these things with his own eyes and had not merely accepted other people's reports. Gollancz also wrote to a newspaper editor: "Youth [in Germany] is being poisoned and re-nazified: we have all but lost the peace."[\[29\]](#)

Victor Gollancz concluded: "The plain fact is when spring is in the English air we are starving the German people...Others, including ourselves, are to keep or be given comforts while the Germans lack the bare necessities of existence. If it is a choice between discomfort for another and suffering for the German, the German must suffer; if between suffering for another and death for the German, the German must die."[\[30\]](#)

Months after the war had ended and the Allies had assumed complete control of the German government, the Bishop of Chichester, quoting a noted German pastor, said: "Thousands of bodies are hanging in the trees in the woods around Berlin and nobody bothers to cut them down. Thousands of corpses are carried into the sea by the Oder and Elbe Rivers—one doesn't notice it any longer. Thousands and thousands are starving in the highways...Children roam the highways alone, their parents shot, dead, lost."[\[31\]](#)

Starvation Policies Continue

Despite the efforts of U.S. senators and British humanitarians, the Allied starvation policies continued through 1946 and into 1947. A group of German doctors reported in 1947 that the actual daily calorie ration issued for three months in the Ruhr section of the British Zone averaged only 800 per person. Dr. Gustav Stolper, a member of the Hoover Commission fact-finding team, reported that the ration in both the British and American Zones for “a long time in 1946 and 1947 dropped to between 700 and 1,200 calories per day.” [32]

U.S. Secretary of War Robert Patterson wrote to U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall concerning the famine in Germany in 1947: “[Our] occupation has no chance of success if these [famine] conditions continue. This state of affairs has been foreseen, and I have urged repeatedly that priority be recognized for food shipments to Germany. The basis for the priority is the prevention of famine in the US-UK zones of Germany...” [33]

Germany was still being operated under the Morgenthau Plan and the Potsdam Agreement. These two programs shared a crucial conceptual flaw: central to both schemes was the paradoxical policy of transforming Germany into an agricultural economy while at the same time depriving Germany of her most valuable agricultural regions and displacing the population of these regions into rump Germany. These policies made it impossible for Germany to feed her population. Germany would have to industrialize to be able to export something to buy a minimum diet for her people. By taking away a quarter of Germany’s arable land, the Allies created a situation in which Germany’s existence would necessarily be even more dependent on industrialization than before the war. [34]

The economic disruptions caused by Germany’s zonal partition also hurt the German economy. The Soviet Zone oriented itself more and more toward the East and continued to extract maximum reparations out of its zone. The French Zone stagnated because of France’s unwillingness to cooperate in any all-German program until the question of the Saar was solved in France’s favor. France also feared a revival of Germany’s economic strength. [35]

The refusal to feed the Germans—or allow anyone else to feed them—gave rise to extremely negative feelings among Germans toward the Allies. Carl Zuckmayer reported conversations he overheard in bread lines in the American Zone: “Yes, Hitler was bad, our war was wrong, but now they are doing the same wrong to us, they are all the same, there is no difference, they want to enslave Germany in exactly the same way as Hitler wanted to enslave the Poles, now we are the Jews, the “inferior race”, they are letting us starve intentionally, can’t you see that is their plan, they take away all our sources of income and let us die slowly, the gas chambers worked quicker...” [36]

German Protestant Church president and former Dachau prisoner Martin Niemöller spoke of the suffering and starvation of Germans after the war. Niemöller said to an American audience when he toured the United States from December 1946 to April 1947:

The offices of our [American] military government are very nicely and cozily heated and our military government people live a good life as far as nourishment and everything else, even housing, is concerned. But they don’t know how people really think and react who are hungry, who are on the way to starving.

Niemöller said Germans were receiving no better than “the lowest ration ever heard of in a Nazi concentration camp.” [37]

Although Niemöller raised more money than expected from his American tour, he was disappointed in its outcome because he was not able to improve U.S. occupation policies in Germany. After months in America, Niemöller's return to war-ravaged Germany came as a shock. Niemöller wrote to Pastor Ewart Turner:

The winter is over, but you feel it everywhere—in the cold which is still harboring in the rooms, especially in this old castle with its thick stone walls. The water pipes are broken. No running water in kitchen or toilet. Sitting at my desk I shiver from cold even now, and the only place where I feel some relief is once again in the bed. The food situation is more than difficult, and I scarcely dare to take a slice of bread, thinking that Hertha, Tini, and Hermann [his children] are far more in need of having it than I, and I can't help feeling guilty for being so well fed [in the United States]. The whole aspect of life is grim and dark; you see the traces of progressive starvation in every face you come to see. [38]

The physical and emotional toll of hunger, cold and disillusionment made life in Germany intolerable for Niemöller. Niemöller's wife Else bemoaned when they got back to Germany from America that, "It was so much easier there than here." Niemöller told Pastor Turner that if things didn't improve, "I should prefer to be back in my cell number 31 at Dachau." Niemöller blamed "the followers of the Morgenthau Plan" who had moved their "headquarters from Washington to the American Zone." [39]

In another letter to Turner in the fall of 1947, Niemöller wrote:

The [coming] winter will be a very severe test for all of us. The rations in fat and meat have been cut again to 25 grams of butter and 100 grams of meat a week! And no potatoes. The normal consumer probably will die this winter, and that Jew [in the occupation forces] will have been right who answered my question, what would become of the too many people in the Western Zones, by saying: "Don't worry, we shall look after that and the problem will be solved in quite a natural way!"

Niemöller understood the Jewish official's phrase "a natural way" to mean death by starvation. [40]

Starvation Policies End

What finally led the Western Allies to a revision of their occupation policy in Germany was the fear of a Communist takeover of Europe. The Western Allies feared that if Germany remained Europe's slum, social unrest would force it into the Communist camp and the rest of Europe would follow. The anti-Communists in Poland had already been forced out of power, with only a few anti-Communists escaping to safety. Similar undemocratic developments were subverting Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The Communist parties in France and Italy were gaining strength and had caused several general strikes. Europe was ripe for a Communist takeover, and the Western Allies realized that something needed to be done to stop it. [41]

The threat of a Communist takeover in Europe had long been recognized by Allied leaders. French Marshal Alphonse Juin stated to Gen. George Patton at a dinner in Paris in August 1945: "It is indeed unfortunate that the English and Americans have destroyed the only sound country in Europe--and I do not mean France--therefore the road is now open for the advent of Russian communism." [42]

Patton himself had warned of the danger of Russian communism resulting from the destruction of Germany. Patton stated, "What we are doing is to utterly destroy the only semi-modern state in Europe so that Russia can swallow the whole." [43]

After an unsuccessful Moscow meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in March 1947, the Western Allies realized the necessity of setting a new course independent of the Soviet Union. George F. Kennan observed, "It was plain that the Soviet leaders had a political interest in seeing the economies of the Western European peoples fail under anything other than communist leadership." With total economic disintegration in Europe imminent, a new plan was needed to shore up the ailing European economies.[\[44\]](#)

The European Recovery Program, better known as the Marshall Plan, was originally envisaged by U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall to promote the economic recovery of Europe on both sides of the iron curtain. However, the Soviet Union took steps to prevent any of the Eastern European countries from participating in the Marshall Plan. The Soviet Union organized a rival program for recovery in Eastern Europe known as the Molotov Plan. The Soviet-dominated Cominform urged Communists everywhere to help defeat the Marshall Plan, which it described as an instrument for "world domination by American imperialism."[\[45\]](#)

The Marshall Plan withstood the Soviet challenge. For the period from April 3, 1948 to June 30, 1952, the Marshall Plan allocated \$3.176 billion to the United Kingdom, \$2.706 billion to France, and \$1.474 billion to Italy. Only \$1.389 billion went to West Germany, of which Germany later repaid approximately \$1 billion. However, the German economy was helped the most by the aid. One commentator described the effect of the Marshall Plan on West Germany:

The effects had been prodigious, equaled in no other European country, although Germany got only a relatively small portion of Marshall Plan aid. Europe received in all \$20 billion from the United States; in 1954 the figures per capita had amounted to \$39 for Germany as against \$72 for France, \$77 for England, \$33 for Italy and \$104 for Austria. But in Germany the help came at precisely the right time, when the accumulated pressures for both physical and psychological reconstruction had reached a bursting point.[\[46\]](#)

The effect of the Marshall Plan in Germany was almost magical. The German economy was plainly reviving within months; within a year it was expanding faster than any other economy in Europe; and within a decade Germany was close to the richest country in Europe. The growth of Germany's economy put an end to the starvation of the German people. According to Gen. Maurice Pope, who in 1948 was with the Canadian Military Mission in Germany, "conditions improved overnight...[soon] the modest corner grocery store was displaying delicacies of all kinds and at quite reasonable prices."[\[47\]](#)

How Many Germans Starved to Death after World War II?

The death-rate figures reported in the U.S. Military Governor reports indicate that very few Germans died among the expelled or non-expelled Germans of the three Western zones. These widely disseminated U.S. Military Governor reports have been accepted by most historians, and are the basis for the belief today that the death rate among Germans was not unusually high after World War II.

The falsity of these reports is shown by comparing the 1947 report, which was a year of extreme starvation and misery remembered by Germans as the Hunger Year, to other peacetime years in Germany. The U.S. Military Governor report in December 1947 stated that the death rate among German civilians was 12.1 per year per thousand. This is only slightly higher than the death rate among Germans before the war, and is less than the death rate of 12.2 per thousand per year during the two

prosperous years of 1968-1969. The death-rate figure in the 1947 U.S. Military Governor report of 12.1 per year per thousand cannot possibly be accurate.[\[48\]](#)

The reality is that millions of resident German civilians died after the end of World War II. James Bacque estimates 5.7 million Germans already residing in Germany died from the starvation policies implemented by the Allies after the war. Bacque details how this 5.7 million death total is calculated:

The population of all occupied Germany in October 1946 was 65,000,000, according to the census prepared under the ACC. The returning prisoners who were added to the population in the period October 1946-September 1950 numbered 2,600,000 (rounded), according to records in the archives of the four principal Allies. Births according to the official German statistical agency, Statistisches Bundesamt, added another 4,176,430 newcomers to Germany. The expellees arriving totaled 6,000,000. Thus the total population in 1950 before losses would have been 77,776,430, according to the Allies themselves. Deaths officially recorded in the period 1946-50 were 3,235,539, according to the UN Yearbook and the German government. Emigration was about 600,000, according to the German government. Thus the population found should have been 73,940,891. But the census of 1950 done by the German government under Allied supervision found only 68,230,796. There was a shortage of 5,710,095 people, according to the official Allied figures (rounded to 5,700,000).[\[49\]](#)

Bacque's calculations have been confirmed by Dr. Anthony B. Miller, who is a world-famous epidemiologist and Head of the Department of Preventive Medicine and Biostatistics at the University of Toronto. Miller read the whole work, including the documents, and checked the statistics, which he says "confirms the validity of [Bacque's] calculations..." Miller states: "These deaths appear to have resulted, directly or indirectly, from the semi-starvation food rations that were all that were available to the majority of the German population during this time period."[\[50\]](#)

Conclusion

The millions of Germans who starved to death do not constitute the entire story of the crime that was committed on Germany after World War II. German women who had been repeatedly raped by Allied soldiers had to bear the physical and psychological scars for the rest of their lives. Millions of German expellees who lost all of their real estate and most of their personal property were never compensated by the Allies. Instead, they had to live in abject poverty in Germany after being expelled from their homes. Millions of other Germans had their property stolen or destroyed by Allied soldiers. The Allied postwar treatment of Germany is surely one of the most brutal, criminal and unreported tragedies in world history.

Notes

[\[1\]](#) Behnke, Capt. Albert R., USN, MC, "Physiological and Psychological Factors in Individual and Group Survival," June 1958 (Behnke Papers, Box 1, HIA). Quoted in Bacque, James, *Crimes and Mercies: The Fate of German Civilians under Allied Occupation, 1944-1950*, 2nd edition, Vancouver, British Columbia: Talonbooks, 2007, p. 89.

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